

## **Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel**

Minutes of a meeting of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel held at the Jeffrey Room, The Guildhall, St Giles Street, Northampton NN1 1DE on Monday 14 August 2023 at 10.00 am.

### **Present:**

Councillor Gill Mercer (Deputy Chair) (in the Chair)  
Councillor Fiona Baker  
Councillor Zoe McGhee  
Councillor Ken Pritchard  
Councillor Winston Strachan  
Mrs Anita Shields  
Miss Pauline Woodhouse

### **Substitute Members:**

Councillor Greg Lunn

### **Also in Attendance:**

Stephen Mold, Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner  
David Peet, proposed candidate for appointment as the interim Chief Executive, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner  
Helen King, Chief Finance Officer, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner  
Stuart McCartney, Governance and Accountability Manager, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner  
Catherine Whitehead, Director Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer, West Northamptonshire Council  
James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, West Northamptonshire Council  
Richard Woods, Democratic Services Officer, West Northamptonshire Council  
Adam Taylor, East Midlands Executive Council Member, Fire Brigades Union

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Councillor David Smith  
Councillor Jon-Paul Carr  
Councillor André González De Savage  
Councillor Dorothy Maxwell  
Councillor Russell Roberts

There were also four members of the public in attendance.

## **164. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors Smith, Carr, González De Savage, Maxwell and Roberts and from substitute members Councillors Irwin and Jelley. Councillor Lunn substituted for Councillor Smith.

165. **Notification of requests from members of the public to address the meeting**

None received.

166. **Declarations of Interest**

None declared.

167. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting and thanked Panel members for their commitment in attending recent additional meetings that the Panel had needed to hold.

168. **Proposed appointment by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire of an interim Chief Executive**

The Chair welcomed Mr David Peet to the meeting and Panel members present introduced themselves.

The Democratic Services Assistant Manager summarised the statutory requirements relating to confirmation hearings and the process to be followed by the Panel, highlighting the following points.

- The Panel's questions to the candidate at the confirmation hearing should focus on their professional competence and personal independence.
- The confirmation hearing was intended to be a final check and not to repeat or duplicate the process that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) had used to identify the candidate.
- The Panel did not have the power to veto the proposed appointment of a chief executive of the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC). It could decide to recommend that an appointment not be made. However, this should be a rare scenario as it would effectively mean that the Panel considered that the candidate did not meet the minimum standards for the role.

The Chair then invited the PFCC to introduce Mr David Peet as his proposed appointment as interim Chief Executive of the OPFCC. The PFCC made the following points:

- Mr Peet had 14 years' senior experience in policing governance, including with Northamptonshire Police, which meant that this was not the first confirmation hearing he had attended.
- Panel members were aware of the background to the current appointment. The PFCC needed to appoint an interim Chief Executive and needed a candidate with sufficient seniority and experience for the role.
- Mr Peet's previous experience and local knowledge would enable him to make a fast start, with the support of colleagues in the OPFCC.
- The appointment of an interim Chief Executive would provide continuity whilst the permanent role was advertised.

- The Panel had an important part to play in the overall appointment process and he was sure that it would carry out this role with appropriate vigour and insight.

In response to a question from the Panel the PFCC confirmed that Mr Peet would be employed on a contract as a consultant, as the PFCC had received HR advice that this represented the most straightforward approach to take. However, Mr Peet would have the full powers of the Chief Executive.

The Panel then asked Mr Peet a series of questions relating to his professional competence and personal independence.

Mr Peet was asked what particularly attracted him to this opportunity to carry out the role of Chief Executive on an interim basis. Mr Peet responded that when he had been contacted by the PFCC he had thought that the role offered a great opportunity to use his previous experience. Northamptonshire always had a place in his heart. He also liked a challenge.

Mr Peet was asked what he saw as the priorities for the OPFCC in the immediate future and what he would take from his previous professional experience to enable him to contribute to delivering these effectively. Mr Peet made the following points:

- One of the key priorities for the OPFCC was dealing with the recent period of instability. He would aim to address this and to provide strong advice to the PFCC to assist him in carrying out his role.
- The next PFCC election would take place in under a year. Part of the role of the PFCC's Monitoring Officer was to ensure that the OPFCC would continue to carry out its functions effectively in this context. He had significant experience of this as he had overseen several elections from the perspective of a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)'s office.

Mr Peet was asked how he would ensure that he was fully informed about the elements of the role relating to the Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority. Mr Peet made the following points:

- He had significant previous experience of working with Fire and Rescue colleagues: for example, in Derbyshire he had been part of the senior team leading the development of a joint headquarters and training facility.
- He had previously chaired the Association of Policing and Crime Chief Executives, which also gave experience of both elements of the PFCC's remit.

Mr Peet was asked to give an example of when he had moved into a new role or organisation at a strategic level and quickly needed to understand it so as to inform him in carrying out his role, the approach he had taken and how effective this had been. Mr Peet made the following points:

- He had taken up the role of Chief Executive of the Derbyshire OPCC in April 2013, soon after the PCC model of governance had been implemented. He had inherited an officer team from the former police authority and new ways of working were still being understood. In this situation he needed to instil confidence amongst staff members in his understanding of the new governance model and that he would listen and respond to their concerns.

- Whilst he had been the Chief Executive of the Derbyshire OPCC there had been a very low level of staff turnover, consistently high staff satisfaction ratings and good feedback on his management. The Derbyshire OPCC had also repeatedly been recognised for its performance on transparency.

Mr Peet was asked what experience he would bring to supporting the delivery of the strategic priorities in the PFCC's Police, Fire and Crime Plan relating to prevention and early intervention and to protecting and supporting those who are vulnerable. Mr Peet made the following points:

- He had significant previous experience of developing and delivering Police and Crime plans. As Chief Executive of the Derbyshire OPCC he had also worked on various early intervention and prevention initiatives.
- As a senior leader at the Big Issue Foundation earlier in his career he had done considerable work on the prevention of homelessness, which gave him practical experience of frontline service delivery.

Mr Peet was asked what his approach was to building and maintaining productive relationships with partner organisations, particularly when dealing with challenging matters, in order to achieve good outcomes. Mr Peet made the following points:

- Partnership working had been a golden thread throughout his career. His approach was based on honesty, making time for partners, looking at what they were trying to achieve and identifying synergies.
- One of his proudest achievements as Chief Executive of the Derbyshire OPCC was bringing together partners on the provision of housing for high-risk offenders. This had taken a lot of effort to achieve and it was important to commit sufficient time to partnership working.

Mr Peet was asked to comment on his experience of the youth offending field, given that the OPFCC played a leading role in the Youth Offending Board. Mr Peet advised that he had gained significant experience in this field from an OPCC perspective in Derbyshire and Leicestershire. The Leicestershire PCC had chaired the Local Criminal Justice Board and, as Chief Executive, he had needed to ensure that the PCC was briefed on all relevant subjects including youth offending.

Mr Peet was asked how he would seek to encourage the maintenance of high standards in the way that the PFCC and the OPFCC operated. Mr Peet made the following points:

- One of the Chief Executive's key roles was to support the PFCC to operate in a way that maintained public trust in the role. He had worked towards this aim through many years in his professional career.
- He was prepared to speak truth to power. The Chief Executive was a trusted advisor to the PFCC but should also be able to challenge the PFCC where necessary in the interests of the public good. He had practical experience of doing this in previous roles. He believed that the Chief Executive should give the PFCC options to consider rather than just a negative response.

Mr Peet was asked to give an example of when he had been required to challenge someone at a senior level about a course of action that they were proposing and how he went about doing this effectively. Mr Peet made the following points:

- During the COVID-19 pandemic the Derbyshire PCC had provided support for projects intended to protect vulnerable older people from rogue traders. As part of this the PCC had wanted to give funding to a local foodbank for a shopping service.
- As Chief Executive he had thought what the PCC proposed to do was outside the PCC's powers. He had therefore given the PCC alternative options for achieving the outcomes sought. This had resulted in a scheme to provide pre-loaded store credit cards to older people, which they could ask others to use without risking that their bank account would be cleared.

Mr Peet was asked what relationship he would seek to have with the Panel if he was appointed and how the Panel could contribute to supporting his role. Mr Peet made the following points:

- He had extensive experience of working with panels, particularly in Derbyshire. As Chief Executive he had maintained a good relationship with the Monitoring Officer for the panel and had communicated regularly with the Monitoring Officer about the panel's work programme.
- The Panel was ultimately seeking the same outcomes as the PFCC and his staff, which was to enable local residents to receive the best quality services. As Chief Executive he would seek to work collaboratively with the Panel. Its role was to scrutinise and support the PFCC and he would assist the PFCC to provide information requested by the Panel.

A Panel member questioned that Mr Peet had been endorsed on LinkedIn by the PFCC but not by the Derbyshire or Leicestershire PCCs. Mr Peet was asked to comment on the reasons for this and on his personal independence if appointed as interim Chief Executive, particularly given the context for the proposed appointment. Mr Peet made the following points:

- He could only speculate why the other PCCs had not endorsed him on LinkedIn. He did not know how much the individuals concerned used the platform.
- His ability to maintain personal independence was demonstrated by his track record as an OPCC chief executive across many years. This had included work at national level on police complaints reform and with the Home Office on two spending reviews.
- He understood why the question had been asked in the current context. He had worked as a colleague with the PFCC on regional collaboration in the East Midlands, including carrying out a significant piece of work on assurance and oversight of collaborations. This could explain the endorsement of him from the PFCC. However, he was not a personal friend of the PFCC.
- His aim if appointed as the interim Chief Executive was to provide a good quality service to the PFCC and to Northamptonshire residents. He hoped to have the opportunity to demonstrate this in practice.

The Chair reminded the Panel of the purpose of the confirmation hearing and that it was not intended to be a selection process.

The Chair invited Mr Peet to raise any questions that he wished to ask the Panel or further comments that he wished to make. Mr Peet advised that he had no questions or additional comments.

169. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

170. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

The Chair requested the Panel to agree that the remainder of the meeting be held in private session.

RESOLVED that: under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that if the public and press were present it would be likely that exempt information under Part 1 Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A to the act of the descriptions would be disclosed to them.

The remainder of the meeting took place in private session.

171. **Report and recommendation to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire on the proposed appointment of an interim Chief Executive**

The Panel considered its report and recommendation on the proposed appointment.

At the conclusion of discussion the Chair invited the Panel to reach a resolution on the proposed appointment. On a vote of 7 members in favour and one against it was:

RESOLVED that: the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel recommends that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire appoints Mr David Peet as interim Chief Executive.

The meeting closed at 11.15 am

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_